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AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION
ON THE
DROPSY:

READ AND DEFENDED AT A
PUBLICK EXAMINATION,
HELD BY THE MEDICAL PROFESSORS, BEFORE THE
REV. JOSEPH WILLARD, S. T. D. PRESIDENT,
AND THE *GOVERNORS* OF THE *UNIVERSITY* AT *CAMBRIDGE*,
FOR THE *DEGREE* OF *BACHELOR* IN *MEDICINE*,
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BY WILLIAM DIX, A. M.

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TO

John Warren, M. D.

PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY AND SURGERY IN THE UNIVERSITY
AT CAMBRIDGE, COUNSELLOR OF THE AMERICAN
ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,
CORRESPONDING MEMBER
OF THE
LONDON MEDICAL, AND COUNSELLOR OF THE MASSACHUSETTS
MEDICAL SOCIETIES,
MEMBER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS AND PHILADELPHIA
AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES,
AND SECOND VICE PRESIDENT OF THE HUMANE SOCIETY,

THE FOLLOWING
Diſſertation
IS RESPECTFULLY
INSCRIBED
BY HIS OBLIGED AND
Grateful PUPIL,

William Dix.

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INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON THE

DROPSY:

Every attempt by diſcuſſion to throw light upon ſubjects, obſcured by imperfect information, or perplexed by oppoſing theories, muſt be acknowledged a tribute to the cauſe of ſcience and of truth. In this view, the following pages muſt found their claim to the candor of the generous and the enlightened. The ſeat and cauſes of dropſy, its ſymptoms and indications of cure, form the ſubject of the preſent inquiry. It may be defined a collection of water, or the ſerous part of blood exuded from the capillary extremities of the arteries into the interſtices of the cellular membrane, or ſeparately into cyſts; the former of which is called diffuſed, the latter encyſted.

A MORE particular deſcription of this diſeaſe, and its ſeat, will appear rather ſuperfluous, ſince they are too well underſtood to need farther illuſtration. I ſhall firſt proceed to notice, as briefly as poſſible, ſome of its leading diagnoſtics, cauſes, and indications of cure; then endeavour to elucidate the ſubject by ſome phyſiological inquiries; remark on ſeveral medicines adapted to the cure, and conclude by relating a caſe, in which the operation of ſome particular medicines were attended with ſingular effects.

DIAGNOSIS.

THE ſerum, collected in a cavity in a diſproportionate quantity, compreſſes its contiguous parts, and deranges the functions of the neighbouring organs. The ſymptoms are, in degree, according to the reſiſtance of the ſides of the cavity to the fluid:

The time in which it is filled; the ſenſibility of the parts; and the greater or leſs the importance of the ſurrounding organs. Water collected is generally clear; but when its thinner parts are abſorbed, it acquires a mucous conſiſtence, and exhibits a variety of colors. When the fibres are macerated in this fluid, they become greatly relaxed. The water acquires a corroding* acrimonious quality by its ſtagnation, and its particles, being received into the circulating fluids, give riſe to many formidable diſeaſes,† which baffle the force of medicine, and evade the ſkill of the phyſician.

PROGNOSIS.

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* From an hydrothorax, the fluid has been found ſo extremely acrid, as to erode the diaphragm, and paſs into the abdomen.—Vid. Act. Medic. Berloin. dec. 1 Vol. vi. ſec. 8.

The water of aſcites has been known to be ſo very active, as to raiſe puſtules upon the hands of the ſurgeon, and its effluvia ſo highly fœtid and contagious, that typhus has been the conſequence.—Philoſ. Tranſ. No. 454. Sec. 4.

† Monro.

PROGNOSIS.

THE cauſes of this diſeaſe are numerous and various, reſulting from the conſtitution, habits of indulgence, or abſtinence, accidents and preternatural cauſes. Debility, from whatever ſource originating, may give riſe to it; particularly from hemorrhages, or any exceſſive evacuation. Obſtructions of the larger or ſmaller blood veſſels, from polypi &c. Compreſſion and ſtricture, as from geſtation; and ſchirrous tumors ſituated near, or affecting the function of any important organ. It may likewiſe proceed from violent exertions; rupture of a veſſel or hydropic cyſt. Abuſe * of fermented liquors. Rigidity of fibre, &c.

THE methods of cure are next to be treated of, which according to Doctor Monro have been divided into three: And no other diviſion can, with more propriety, be adopted; and to him we would refer, as having given a

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* SYDENHAM aſſerts that dropſy ariſes oftener from this ſource than any other.

a more minute deſcription in his indications of cure. In taking advantage of that part of his work, we ſhall endeavour to bring into view thoſe things, which might be deemed eſſential, or valued as moſt important.

The firſt object is to remove the cauſe of the diſeaſe; ſecond, to evacuate the water, and third, to prevent a relapſe.

INDICATION I.

IF the diſeaſe proceed from a relaxed ſtate of the ſolids, remedies muſt be uſed for exciting the contractile power of the fibres; which may be done by a variety of medicines and applications, that ſtrengthen and ſtimulate the habit. Friction is of ſingular advantage by exciting perſpiration; exerciſe and gentle compreſſion, by aſſiſting the cohesion of the parts. Medicines of a pungent, bitter and aſtringent quality, fœtid gums, volatiles, fixed alkalies, acrid ſalts, preparations of iron &c. increaſe the oſcillatory power of the fibres. Aſtringents, externally applied, are ſometimes ſerviceable; but taken internally, are rather detrimental;

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for, by uniting with the food and chyle, it is not allowed to paſs freely through the ſmaller ſeries of veſſels. If the diſeaſe ariſes from obſtructions,* tumors, ſchirri, impoſthumes, polypi, &c. very little relief can be had; except from ſurgical operations, or medicines appropriated to the cure of the original complaint. When it originates from rigidity* of the fibres, nouriſhing diet ſhould be employed: The ſkin lubricated with penetrating oils. Warm water, impregnated with the mineral particles of ſulphur, ſalt, or iron may be uſed. If a veſſel be ruptured, no aſſiſtance can be given, unleſs there be acceſs to apply a ligature, or ſome ſtyptic medicine.

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* A REMARKABLE inſtance of a diſeaſed ovarium, in a child of about eleven years of age, under the care of Doctor Aſpinwall at Roxbury, who, after attending ſix weeks, requeſted that Doctor John Warren of Boſton might meet him in conſultation. Upon their examination of the abdomen, it was found to be greatly diſtended with ſome fluid; but the hupogaſtric region appeared to contain a hard, unequal, ſchirrus like ſubſtance, which was more or leſs perceptible in ſize and extent, according to the quantity of fluid contained in the abdomen, which at times was ſo great, as to obliterate the tumor, and could be felt only by conſiderable compreſſion. It was agreed to make an inciſion immediately upon the tumor; but no diſeaſe external of the peritoneum was found. The operation of paracentiſis was then performed, and ſeveral gallons of a viſcid fluid drawn off. Six days after, the child died. The water had again collected, in a greater quantity than before. The viſcera in general were diſeaſed. The omentum adhered to the ſurface of the inteſtines. The fallopian tubes and ureters were enlarged much beyond their natural ſize: And the left ovarium, extending from the left towards the right ſide ſix or ſeven inches, exhibited numberleſs hydatids filled with gelatinous matter. This ovarium, independent of any other viſcus, weighed four pounds.

INDICATION.

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* It is a query with ſome, whether rigidity of fibre ever produces the dropſy; in anſwer to which I would obſerve, that the capillary extremities of ſome of the veins, which are leſs elaſtic and more eaſily affected than thoſe of the arteries, may be rendered impervious from rigidity; and therefore, the whole circulating maſs of blood, being brought into a leſs ſphere of action, is returned to the heart in the ſame given time: And the increaſed velocity, which from this circumſtance it muſt neceſſarily acquire, may not improbably occaſion a rupture of ſome ſmaller veſſel.

Doctor Donald Monro aſſerts that rigidity of fibre does take place, and its authenticity ought not to be doubted, ſince he not only relates ſeveral caſes, which came under his own obſervation, but alludes to many others, which have been atteſted by gentlemen of equal veracity.

INDICATION II.

THE ſecond method of cure is performed either by natural or artificial openings. The natural openings are by the extremities of the veins, whoſe power muſt be increaſed ſufficient to abſorb more of the fluid than the arteries pour out. If the water is abſorbed and mixed with the blood, it muſt be immediately expelled. For this purpoſe the ſerous and aqueous excretions, which are made from the ſtomach, inteſtines and urinary paſſages, the ſkin and ſalivary organs, are to be increaſed. This is performed by emetics, cathartics, diuretics and ſudorifics. Emetics promote the oſcillation of the ſolids, by compreſſing the viſcera. They are cautiouſly to be employed, when the patient has been ſubject to hemorrhagy, threatened with lethargy, or laboring under a diſpnea. When given in ſmall doſes ſufficient to nauſeate, and frequently repeated, they often prove to be cathartic, diuretic and ſudorific. If the hydropic water be evacuated by draſtic purges, the ſyſtem becomes greatly weakened; and in fact, they are injurious rather than beneficial, whenever this takes place.

Medicines of the diuretic claſs have often proved fallacious; for, by increaſing the urine, they are ſaid to relax the ſolids. The neutral ſalts and native acid of vegetables promote the excretion of urine, and tend alſo, to leſſen the irritability of the ſyſtem; and therefore, cannot ſtrictly be conſidered as diuretics.

When theſe refrigerants are employed, ſtimulants ſhould be adminiſtered at the ſame time. If the diuretics fail of carrying off more water than is exuded from the arteries, they are injurious. The ſkin, which ought to be attended to, is generally dry; this is to be corrected by diaphoretics, friction and ſtimulants. Mercurials, antimonials and their preparations, all readily increaſe the cutaneous excretions. Opium has the ſame effect; but antimony combined with opium, is much more powerful and efficacious. Doctor Monro particularly recommends that, where friction is neceſſary, it ſhould be performed with flannels, impregnated with aromatic fumes; and the external air excluded from the body, to aſſiſt the operation of medicines, which are internally received.

The abſorption of the fluid cannot eaſily be effected from cavities, which are greatly diſtended, without previouſly relaxing the ſides of the cavities, or drawing off a part of it; for the abſorbent veins cannot have power to act, when the preſſure is ſo exceedingly great. When the artificial methods of leſſening the quantity of water become neceſſary, the evacuation muſt not be made ſuddenly; for the preſſure being diminiſhed, and the blood from the heart, finding leſs reſiſtance, will overſtretch the relaxed parts, and often produce inflammation or gangrene; and at the ſame time, the other organs, being deprived of their proportion of blood, will become paralytic, or unfit for performing their ſeveral functions. The ill effects, which ſometimes occur from taking away theſe waters, are to be obviated, by moderately diſcharging them at different times; by compreſſure upon the part, from which they are taken, and adminiſtering ſuch medicines as tend to give vigor to the habit, and reſtore its loſt energy.

INDICATION III.

THOUGH the two firſt indications may have been in general purſued with ſucceſs, yet there is a third, which ought ever to be attended to with care. There are few diſeaſes, in which patients are ſo liable to a relapſe, as in this. Thoſe, who have recovered from this dangerous diſeaſe, ought rigidly to purſue the uſe of corroborants, and avoid preternatural evacuations, until the ſyſtem has recovered its natural tone, ſtrength and vigor. The cold bath, which heretofore would have been injurious, may now with ſafety be employed.

WHAT has hitherto been ſaid may be conſidered as the outlines of the ſymptoms, cauſes, and cure of this diſeaſe; a diſeaſe, which, though in its various ſtages has frequently been ſucceſsfully treated by many of thoſe methods, which have been pointed out, yet as often has refuſed to yield to the moſt powerful of theſe applications.—As yet there has been no remedy found in the gardens of philoſophy; no curative plan as yet adopted, which proves an effectual antidote to this diſeaſe. Though it has long been a ſubject of diligent inveſtigation among the learned; its cure, of repeated experiments by many; yet there are principles of importance, which have eſcaped the notice of ſome, eluded the ſearch of others, and ſtill remain in a degree of obſcurity.

FROM the confined limits of this diſſertation, ſome few hints only can be ſuggeſted, which it is hoped may be farther illuſtrated by ſome one, whoſe ingenuity and experience may better enable him to attain ſo important an object; ſo invariably the purſuit of the friends of humanity.

As a ſymptom of this diſeaſe, there is ſometimes obſervable a diminution of urine, thick and high colored, without any other thing remarkable preceding the approach of hydropic ſwelling. It has generally been ſuppoſed that loſs of tone in the vaſcular ſyſtem alone has been the cauſe; but if this be the caſe, why is not the ſuperabundant water evacuated by draſtic purges; for by theſe the abſorbents are ſtimulated to an increaſed action? To this ſome may object and ſay, that the outlets by the inteſtines are inſufficient to conduct off ſo large a portion of fluid; but if the whole maſs can be diminiſhed by this method, as it undoubtedly may, why is it not entirely carried off by a repetition? Others may again argue, that the ſtimulus produced by cathartics cannot be carried beyond a certain point, and that the debility will be in proportion to the increaſed action of the veſſels, and that therefore a repetition of them proves ineffectual. This may be admitted;—but where tonics are given in the intervals, in proportion to the increaſe of ſtimuli, the debility produced cannot be ſo great as to forbid a repetition of them. But experience and obſervation ſhew, that a large quantity of hydropic fluid is ſeldom carried off by cathartics alone, which evinces that ſome other plan ought to be purſued, ſince nature never deſigned theſe organs to be the vehicles of water.--During the operation of the draſtic purges, when the ſecretion of urine has been previouſly impeded, the ſtimulus, excited upon the abſorbent veſſels, has been found to have no effect upon the urinary paſſages. Hence ariſes a more natural inference, that the latter are affected independent of the former; and that the increaſed action of the *one*, does not produce a ſimilar effect on the *other*: Therefore the obſtruction of urine depends on a diminiſhed energy of its own organs.

Doctor Milman relates a caſe, in which an aſcites took place in conſequence of a free uſe of barley water, by a patient, who had recovered from an inflammatory fever. The general opinion has been, that a diſeaſe, occaſioned in this way, was to be attributed to the attenuating quality of the liquor thinning the blood. But this cannot be conceived as probable, or even plauſible, if the effects, which cold has upon the body, are conſidered. For let a man in perfect health, while warm, and in free perſpiration, drink immoderately of cold water, and it will often produce an hydrothorax, or an aſcites, in a ſhort time. This does not happen from any defect of the abſorbents, but ſimply from a condenſation of the vapor, which is conſtantly exhaling from the extremities of the arteries. The cold acting ſo immediately upon the ſtomach, the parts, which are contiguous to it, become affected; and thereby cauſing a diminution of vital heat, the vapor condenſes, and cauſes a ſwelling which is more or leſs, according to the degree of cold; and increaſes by the abſorbents being ſooner affected, and poſſeſſing leſs elaſticity than the arteries.—This may be illuſtrated by adducing ſo familiar an example, as the ſweat upon a can of cold water, which operates in the ſame way, and upon ſimilar principles; for the water within, poſſeſſing leſs heat than the atmoſphere, condenſes the vapor upon the external ſurface of the veſſel. Hence it is ſeen exhibiting the form of ſweat or drops; which appearance it would not have made, had not the water been cold. It therefore appears, that this collection is not produced ſo much from the attenuating quality of the liquid, as from the effects of cold; and though the ſwelling may not be immediately brought on; as happened in the caſe related by Doctor or Milman, yet the neighbouring veſſels were ſo frequently rendered inactive, the ſwelling enſued in conſequence of the repeated application of cold drink.

What has been ſaid with reſpect to dropſy, being the moſt common effect of cold ſubſtances, when taken in too great quantities into the ſtomach, naturally leads to the enquiry; what conſtitutions are moſt ſubject to it; and why dropſy, independent of cold, oftener exhibits itſelf in the form of aſcites, than any other ſpecies of the diſeaſe.—Thoſe delicate habits, which are more frequently met with in females, are moſt liable to it. This in part may be accounted for, from the laxity of fibre, and preternatural evacuations, ſo peculiar to them; and, as they are more or leſs copious, may be conſidered as conſtituting one prediſponent cauſe of the diſeaſe, which is in proportion to the evacuation.

Persons of both ſexes are more frequently affected by aſcites, than any other ſpecies of the diſeaſe; and not recollecting that any phyſiological reaſon has as yet been aſſigned, it may not be improper to offer a few ideas on the ſubject.

When we view the ſtructure of the human machine, in proportion ſo exact, and in ſymmetry ſo exquiſite, we find the parts all nicely adapted to its various motions; and formed to defend it from accident and misfortune. Some parts there are however, which appear to be leſs guarded than others. Among the firſt and moſt important is the abdomen and its contents. But this ſeeming defect is undoubtedly a wiſe proviſion in nature; for if it were guarded in the ſame manner as the thorax, with cartilages and bones, the motions of the whole body would be much reſtricted, and the operations of nature confined; reſpiration would be greatly impeded, and the circulation of the blood diminiſhed; the growth and expulſion of the fœtus would be impoſſible; the heart and lungs ſubjected to much injury from inflammatory diſeaſes, not being able to receive aſſiſtance from the action of the abdominal muſcles and diaphragm: The compound action of the lungs, diaphragm and abd. muſc. facilitates the expelling of air, the diſlodging of any offending or extraneous matter, and the cure of diſeaſe.—Though not ſecured by bones and cartilages, it fortunately poſſeſſes an elaſtic property, the advantage of which is evidenced in a variety of inſtances; viz. diſeaſes of the liver, inflammation, geſtation, &c.—From whatever cauſe the abdomen is over diſtended, the veſſels of the peritonæum may loſe their elaſticity; or a rupture of their coats be produced, and dropſy enſue. Theſe veſſels being much thinner than thoſe of other parts, become the ſooneſt affected, and ſuffer more from debility.

The abdomen being the leaſt fortified part; its muſcles poſſeſſed of a leſs degree of firmneſs; the thin and delicate texture of the peritonæum, all unite in rendering it more liable to relaxation and diſeaſe: And theſe are moſt probably the principal reaſons why this ſpecies of dropſy more frequently occurs.

The uſe of liquids in this diſeaſe, whether beneficial or detrimental, has been a point unſettled and much controverted among phyſicians: Some contending that they ſhould never be denied, nor conſidered as increaſing the diſorder; while others maintain that they ought carefully to be avoided, and a nutritive and phlogiſtic regimen purſued. No doubt there are different caſes in which either method may be adopted; where one plan is to be followed, and the other avoided. This will be moſt eaſily accounted for by conſidering the cauſes of thirſt, ſo often a concomitant of dropſy, and referable to an alteration, or change, in the blood. Not meaning to intimate that diſeaſes really exiſt in the blood, but that it undergoes ſome alteration, or acquires certain properties from affections of the ſolids, whereby it may be ſaid to be in a vitiated ſtate. Thirſt may be conſidered as an uneaſy ſenſation, ariſing from a depletion of the lymphatic veſſels of the mouth, fauces and œſophagus; attrition upon the coats of the ſtomach and inteſtines, and the humors of the primæ viæ becoming ſo acrimonious as to irritate their fibres. Now it remains a queſtion, whether the thirſt is produced by the blood parting with the ſerum, and the remaining craſſamentum becoming acrimonious; or whether it depends on the paucity of fluids contained in thoſe veſſels. Doctor Cullen aſſerts that there is no tenacity in the fluids; which idea is generally adopted. But then he does not deny that there may be a thickening of the blood. The ſerous part being chiefly ſeparated, the remaining craſſamentum muſt neceſſarily be more denſe; and the ſame cauſe, from which this denſity ariſes, diminiſhes the whole maſs of circulating fluids. It therefore appears natural to ſuppoſe, that thirſt originates from the want of thin and diluting liquids to defend the coats of the veſſels from thoſe groſſer parts of the blood, which exiſt in the craſſamentum, than from a mere diminution of the fluids.

The ſtomach when evacuated indicates no neceſſity of being repleniſhed with liquid more than ſolid ſubſtances. But let the latter be given alone, and a great degree of thirſt takes place; which ſhews that it is altogether dependant upon irritation: For the ſecreted humors of the ſtomach, without the addition of other liquors, being inſufficient to macerate and diſſolve the aliment taken into it, admit of friction upon its coats. In conjunction with this, the diſorder is increaſed, the humors become depraved, and the ſtomach further debilitated. The ſkin, in particular, becomes very dry; from which circumſtance a phenomenon takes place, on which we may account for the increaſe of waters, though drink has been cautiouſly avoided for a long time. This kind of diet ſo much conſpires with the diſeaſe, that in hydropic perſons, who take no drink, a large quantity of fluid will be imbibed from the air; ſo that this extraordinary inhalation of moiſture muſt be imputed to the attraction, which the ſkin has to it, from the denial of drink and nature of the aliment. The ſame principles will apply to the blood. For in fevers an uncommon degree of thirſt is always found. Now the blood, moving with greater velocity from the increaſed action of the veſſels, produces great irritation upon its coats; and this propenſity for liquids is in exact proportion to the irritability of the veſſels, and the increaſed velocity, with which the blood moves. The immediate cauſe of this irritation is the attrition of the red globules upon the coats of the veſſels, which creates a frequent contraction of them; and according to their abundance, will be, not only the contraction, but ſubſequent irritation. A variety of arguments might be brought to prove that inanition of the veſſels does not, in the leaſt, occaſion thirſt; but that it proceeds from the cauſes above mentioned. For if it could poſſibly ariſe from inanition, why would it not take place moſt ſenſibly after a copious hemorrhage? It may therefore be inferred, that thirſt has the ſame origin, both in fever and in dropſy, viz. irritation; and that this is produced, in the latter, by the craſſamentum being deprived of the ſerum; and the red globules bearing too great a proportion to the whole maſs of blood.

From what has been ſaid, it appears evident, that the thirſt, ariſing from the blood parting with the ſerum, the craſſamentum being condenſed, and probably becoming acrimonious, renders obvious the benefit reſulting from the free uſe of liquids. One exception may be made to this rule. In diſeaſes of the meſentery and its glands, with ſchirroſity of the liver, the operation of the moſt powerful diuretics has proved unſucceſsful; and therefore the oppoſite mode of treatment may be more properly employed.

To treat this ſubject methodically, it will be neceſſary to take into conſideration ſome few medicines, which are beſt adapted to evacuate a collection of hydropic water.

ALTHOUGH the diuretic plan has been eſteemed as doubtful and uncertain, from its failure in ſome inſtances; yet, from many experiments and obſervations, it appears to be the only ſure method of remedy. To value it then, as the grand deſideratum in the cure of the diſeaſe, may be highly proper.

THE cream of tartar may be recommended as a ſafe and uſeful diuretic, poſſeſſing ſuperior virtues, and producing remarkable effects. Doctor Milman beſtows ſome encomiums upon this medicine, and relates many caſes, in which it obtained the moſt flattering ſucceſs. He very juſtly obſerves, that "the beſt diuretics can have no effect, unleſs combined with plenty of diluting liquors." In confirmation of this, we would refer to fifteen caſes of hydropic patients, narrated in the Acta Bononienſia, who continued the uſe of cream of tartar from thirty to forty days, without any perceptible effect; but what was remarkable, they were afterwards cured by half an ounce of it taken every day in a large quantity of water; which method diſcovered its peculiar efficacy and ſalutary effects, by cauſing a plentiful flow of urine in a few hours.

The digitalis purpurea has acquired a degree of celebrity among many. But the virtues, which are aſcribed to it, I do not think are to be depended upon; for I have ſeen ſeveral inſtances, in which it has failed of that ſucceſs, which is ſo generally attributed to it. Indeed I have never known an inſtance where the ſame effects might not be produced, and with greater advantage, by the nicotiana. Doctor Fowler ſtrongly recommends, and highly extols the virtues of this plant, the application of which has been attended with great utility.

I would beg leave to conclude by relating a caſe of anaſarca, which came under my cogniſance during my pupilage.—A married woman, of about thirty years of age, naturally of a delicate and ſlender conſtitution, had been troubled with various complaints from the age of fourteen. She had been married three years, during which time her diſorders were obſtinate and laſting.—Medical aſſiſtance was repeatedly reſorted to, from which temporary relief was often obtained. During the laſt ſix months of her illneſs, from ſome of the following ſymptoms, ſhe fancied herſelf pregnant, which afterwards was not found to be the caſe. She complained of great nauſea, coldneſs of the extremities, ſyncope, &c. which were ſucceeded by a bilious fever, that terminated but to be followed by a diſeaſe equally alarming and diſtreſſing. Her catamenia now were obſtructed, a ſwelling of the lower extremities took place, which daily increaſed and became more formidable. The general mode of treatment was purſued, ſuch as cathartics, ſome few diuretics, ſcarification, friction, compreſſion, veſication, tonics, emetics, &c. but all without any viſible effect, or permanent advantage. A hectic pulſe and great expectoration followed, attended with regular exacerbations, which betrayed ſtrong marks of an affection of the lungs. The diſtenſion of the abdomen and lower extremites was exceſſive, and even threatened a rupture of their fibres; and though part of the water was evacuated by ſcarifying and bliſtering, it ſoon returned with rapid increaſe. Her ſtomach had become ſo irritable as to reject almoſt every tonic preparation except the *Liq. Quaſs.* A diarrhea enſued, which indicated a tendency to putrefaction, accompanied with dyſpnea, and a ſuppreſſion of urine. Her ſituation now exhibited a truly melancholy appearance; and afforded no hope of recovery, or proſpect of relief. As almoſt every probable means that had been employed proved abortive, and death ſeemed rapidly advancing, a digreſſion from the common mode of practice could not be deemed improper; and even vague experiment might be juſtifiable. Accordingly the tincture of cantharides was adminiſtered in repeated and large doſes. This had no great effect, for the firſt eight hours, excepting a ſenſe of heat and great thirſt. A little weak beverage was now permitted. It muſt be remarked that liquids had before been prohibited; and at this time were rather ſparingly given. But nature now ſeemed to be rouſed from that torpid inactivity, which had ſo completely invaded the whole ſyſtem. The urinary paſſages were relieved, and a free and copious diſcharge induced. The abſorption and evacuation of a greater part of the ſuperabundant fluid was effected, in the courſe of four or five days. Tonics at the ſame time were adminiſtered, in the greateſt poſſible quantity, that the ſtomach would allow. Bandages were employed to aſſiſt the contractility of the parts, and prevent a relapſe. But this appeared to be the laſt effort of nature to rid herſelf of a diſeaſe, which had become inſupportable. Dyſpnea and faintneſs now ſucceeded, which increaſing threatened a total ſuſpenſion of the functions of life. The energy of the ſyſtem, being inſufficient to continue a reaction, from the extreme debility, to which ſhe was now reduced, ſphacelus commenced and diſſolution enſued.

The body was afterwards examined, and the lungs were found to be diſeaſed, and ſome of the viſcera of the abdomen.—A relation of this caſe may ſerve to ſhew, that the internal uſe of cantharides may be freely and with ſafety employed. And though in this inſtance there was a fatal termination, yet it ought to be no argument againſt a repetition of the ſame medicine; for other coexiſtent diſeaſes were of themſelves ſufficient to produce death, though perhaps not ſo ſuddenly.

I HAVE taken the liberty to make theſe ſtatements, with circumſtantial minuteneſs, where it was deemed neceſſary, and purſue theſe inquiries with freedom. They are ſubmitted, with the hope, that they may meet the indulgence, and the wiſh that they may be honored with the approbation of the reſpected Patrons and Profeſſors of Medical Science.

FINIS.

MVSEVM BRITANNICVM